

THE WAR of 1914

A FORECAST

What Happens within Six Weeks.

BY W. ERNEST WILLIAMS.



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George Dawkins

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THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

PROLOGUE.

At last! The dogs of war have snapped their chains, and chaos rules the world. The air, the land, the seas resound to cries and groans. With faces blanched, stern visaged and incredulous alike, the inhabitants of the known globe view the coming struggle, and wait, wait, with brave hearts, keen eyes and ears, the end—the ghastly end—of war.



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THE WAR OF 1914

A FORECAST

What Happens Within Six Weeks

By W. ERNEST WILLIAMS

The news which we in Melbourne so anxiously await with joy, with hopes and doubts, will be with us ere these lines appear in print, and will be both cheerful and sad. Here in Australia (so often told) we dwell in a favoured land, and, though the sound of war's alarm has raised us from our pleasures' bent, the dear old mother country, and she alone, must now decide our future destiny. The fortune of this dreadful war will doubtless leave its imprint on many a home beneath the Southern Cross, and for this Australians are prepared. Our merchant ships in various seas may feel the hurtful beak and claws of the demented German Eagle before this savage bird meets its inevitable doom at the hands of John Bull, his allies, and John Bull Junior.

Mingling amongst the crowd that thronged the busy Melbourne streets during the past few days, my heart was stirred with pleasure and with pain to note the determined, yet anxious and doubtful, faces thronging the streets in the vicinity of our great newspaper offices in Collins-street, and also at the overheard conversations which droned upon the atmosphere.

Curious to glean the average man's views on the present struggle, I spent the best part of two days in controversy with each and everyone whom chance threw in my way, and who had formed opinions, definite or indefinite, on the ultimate outcome of Germany's declaration of war on Russia, followed swiftly by the clatter of the German sabre. Some with whom I spoke had unbounded confidence in the mother land, and predicted the immediate downfall of the German nation when the "Great Day"

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

came. Others, who, while admitting England's greatness in bygone days, gravely shook their heads with expressive gesture, and, with a reference to Germany's marvellous sea power, said that they could only hope for the best. One man, who told me that he had spent half his life before the mast on British ships, and was an Englishman born (save the mark!) calmly declared, with the air of a seer, that "the writing was on the wall." On asking for an explanation he told me that he was a newspaper man, and that his enigmatical description in connection with a "wall" meant that England's time as mistress of the sea and ruler of the greatest Empire the world has ever seen was now close at hand, and that what was left of the British Empire at the conclusion of this dreadful war would be governed by various republics! Though English myself and one of the old school—a school that has been brought up to view the Anglo-Saxon Empire as the greatest, the most honourable and just power the world has ever seen—I might have restrained my outburst of anger; but as this man was, out of fifty whom I had spoken to, the only one who claimed to be an Englishman born (though I had spoken to fully a score of Australians, overflowing with loyalty and devotion to their own land and to the mother country, many of whom could not help showing faint doubt and anxiety in their views as to the success of the Empire's ability to crush Germany), I lost my temper with this self-styled "Englishman" and left him to his convictions. The general impression, however, conveyed to my mind in averaging up the consensus of opinion retained at the end of the second night satisfied me that things were not as they should be in the opinion of a certain section of the Australian community. This small section, I am convinced, has been misled by a false doctrine—the doctrine of selfishness—the selfishness of nationalism, and the constant assimilation of anti-monarchical, anti-imperial, and anti-Asiatic literature, freely imbibed, with little serious thought as to the consequence (superficial though I know it will be before this grim fight is over). Yet it has had the most embarrassing effect upon Britain, upon her sons and daughters in Australia (who are impervious to these regrettable views), and lastly upon that courageous, honourable and progressive nation—our allies, the Japanese. But unfortunate though these facts—and facts they are—be, the faintest entertainment of them by even a schoolboy, when this war is

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

over, will be as impossible, as it has been inconceivable to me for the past ten years.

But now to my forecast. The story as read by me through the smoke and din of this, the greatest war the world has ever seen, or is ever likely to see again in our time, will, with certain variations in numbers and in disposition of forces, be as follows:—

A dense throng clamouring for information packed Collins-street from side to side in the vicinity of the "Argus" and the "Age" newspaper offices on Thursday night, 13th August, in the year 1914—for news pregnant with destiny for Australia was expected minute by minute. The air was oppressive! No sound disturbed the silence of the streets, save the occasional toot of a motor car hurrying by with some military officer. The fate of nations hung by a thread! The tension was unbearable. Suddenly a commotion occurred at the entrance of the "Argus" office, and a large sheet of paper was pasted up by one of the staff. A murmur of suppressed excitement ran through the crowd as these words appeared on the notice board:—

"Good news. Important information coming."

On reading these lines a shout of joy split the air, and was taken up by the crowd outside the "Age" office, which had evidently received similar news. During the following few minutes everybody strained their necks, and all eyes were focussed on the board. Ere long the anxious-looked-for news appeared in large black letters:—

"Great victory for the British and Belgian troops. German army routed. French cavalry decimates fleeing Germans. Second British squadron in North Sea sinks two German cruisers."

A yell of triumph greeted the reading of these words, and, as if by magic, the air immediately over the heads of the crowd was filled with waving Union Jacks, produced from the pockets of the now delighted onlookers.

A special edition of the three Melbourne papers issued within a quarter of an hour of receipt of this news contained the following:—

"Immediately upon the landing of Britain's expeditionary force of 125,000 men, under the leadership of Field Marshal Sir John French, Belgium declared war on Germany. The Germans,

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

fighting furiously, having already captured the towns of Liege, Namur, Dinant and Arlon, and having suffered terrible losses in the capture of the former, were opposed with stubborn heroism by the plucky Belgian troops. Forced by overwhelming numbers of the enemy the Belgians retired in the direction of Brussels and Wavre, disputing every inch of the ground as they slowly retreated. Here they were met by the British troops, and Britain took a hand for the first time (on land) in this war.

"A most sanguinary battle at once ensued between the British and the Belgian allies on the one side, and the German army of invasion on the other, in the vicinity of the historical battlefield of Waterloo. The Germans, defeated with terrible loss, retreated in utter disorder towards their frontier. While in full retreat they were attacked from the south by the French army, which shattered their ranks in a splendid cavalry charge, pursuing the Kaiser's troops till their horses were exhausted.

"The casualties on the German side are not known, but are believed to be in the vicinity of 70,000 men, the British expeditionary force losing 4500 killed and 6000 wounded."

This news had the effect of turning the sombre onlookers of a few minutes previous into a cheering, frantic mass. Hats were thrown in the air, and the staidest old gentlemen in the crowd whooped like Red Indians with joy.

During the next few days following on the information of this great victory the Germans were defeated both by the Russians and the French in three engagements, though the loss on the French and Russian sides was very great indeed. Austria, meanwhile, had fought several battles with Russia, France and Servia also engaging this powerful neighbour, with much loss to both sides.

At the end of a week from the receipt of the news of the second battle of Waterloo Melbourne readers learnt with astonishment that Italy, one of the signatories to the Triple Alliance, had (to the horror of the Kaiser and his partner, Austria) actually declared war against them both in the interests of the Triple Entente!! Simultaneously with news of Italy's declaration Holland and Switzerland declared war upon Germany, while Montenegro declared war on Servia's mighty antagonist, Austria. With the exception of Roumania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Denmark, Germany and Austria were now surrounded by a ring of death.

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

The German Baltic Sea fleet had, by this time, laid waste the Russian shores bordering on that sea and the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, reducing the Russian coast from Memel to Reval (in the Gulf of Finland) to a state of barrenness. After several sanguinary encounters between battleships of the Russian and German fleets (in which five of the Russian battleships and three of the German vessels were sunk with all on board), the remaining six Russian battleships retreated behind the submarines, mines, and booms to the shelter of their huge guns on the Kronstadt fortress battlements. Baffled in their attempts to reach the remainder of the Russian fleet at St. Petersburg, the German fleet drew off and made for Vasa, in Finland, where they now induced the Finns, first by coaxing, then by threatening, to declare war on their ancient enemy, Russia. And for a time the German admiral was engaged in convoying transports with Finnish soldiery from a port near Vasa, in the Gulf of Bothnia, to a landing place on the shores of the Gulf of Riga.

But where, asks the reader, are the German high sea fleet, the British North Sea fleet, the French Atlantic fleet, and what are they doing, while Europe reels beneath the blows that shake her surface? Let us go and see!

Like a swarm of angry bees we find the great bulk of Germany's naval strength securely ensconced in the Kiel Canal, the mouths of the Rivers Elbe and Weiser, the harbours of Wilhelms-haven, Cuxhaven, Bremenshaven, Kiel and in Kiel Bay, where they are as safe, for the time being, from attack by any but the blindest and most foolish of navies as a rabbit in its burrow would be from the attacks of a soaring eagle.

Protected on the west coast for a radius of twenty miles seaward by millions of pounds' worth of floating, sunken and semi-sunken mines, the ships of the Kaiser take heed of neither Britain, France nor Russia. Mined with similar devilish ingenuity are the entrances to the Skager Rack, from a point opposite the Naze, in Norway, to the Skaw, on the extreme northerly point of Denmark, in the Cattegat, and teeming in these waters are the submarines of the Teutonic Empire. True, many German battleships, cruisers and torpedo craft are seen at various points in the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea and are chased, in some instances captured, sunk, or retaliating with disastrous results on their allied antagonists. The sound of this cannonading startles

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

dwellers on the east coast of England, but nothing more eventuates for the time being in the hoary North Sea.

Drawn up in battle array, and stretching from Newcastle, in England, in one long line, to within sight of the Naze, in Norway, the battleships of Britain lie in splendid grandeur. Lower down towards the Straits of Dover, and scattered at regular intervals throughout the English Channel from Dunkirk, on the north coast of France, to within a few miles of the southern point of the Dogger Bank, lies the second fleet of Britain, the vessels' bows pointing to the Holland and Belgian coasts. In the English Channel, from Calais to Cape Grisnez, past Cherbourg, and from there to Cape Ushant, the battleships of the French fleet are seen, the tricolour of France fluttering from their mast heads. In the Mediterranean Sea, between Gibraltar and the Island of Candia, the English and French Mediterranean fleets seek, with varying success, their enemy—the German and Austrian ships of war, and the thundering guns proclaim to the dwellers on either side of two continents the death knell of the enemy's naval strength in these waters, though the allied fleets do not escape scathless from the innumerable small encounters and sunken mines during the course of the war.

Japan, who had despatched one-third of her fleet to protect our shipping in the Pacific, and to keep guard in the vicinity of the Australasian and New Zealand coasts, north, south, east and west, was now aroused.

The battleship Australia, with the cruisers Melbourne and Sydney, seek out by all the information available any war craft of Germany, to the east of Australia, especially in the vicinity of Thursday Island and the islands of German New Guinea, torpedo boat destroyers, torpedo boats, and submarine mines guarding Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, the harbours of which are nightly mined.

After a deal of searching and the loss of several vessels, sunk (not captured) by the German cruisers in the Pacific, our own vessels eventually annihilate them, and proceed to annex Germany's possessions in these seas.

No attack is attempted at any time throughout this war on Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide or Hobart.

Within the next fortnight 100,000 Japanese soldiers are mobilised in Kobe and Tokio for instant departure by troop and battle-

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

ships of the Japanese nation (twenty battleships conveying these transports to India). Simultaneously the British army of India (250,000 strong) is mobilised, and 200,000 of them are held in instant readiness to be conveyed by the shortly expected Japanese battleships to the Mediterranean, on the Japanese transports and other available vessels in Indian harbours. The native princes of India and their subjects (who volunteer in thousands) are accepted by Britain for garrison duty in Egypt.

Germany and Austria, not having had enough of fighting by this time (28th August), the Japanese are then arriving in India and taking the place, fully armed, of the British army of occupation, thus preventing unrest amongst the native population. The British Indian army of 200,000 men will (immediately the Japanese take their posts) be transhipped on to the relief of the allied armies in Southern Europe, under Japanese battleship protection, leaving 50,000 of their comrades to keep the Japanese troops in India company.

On approaching the Mediterranean the Japanese fleet anchor at Suez, and help, by the knowledge of their *presence alone*, the British Egyptian army, in the event of any possible native trouble in the land of the Sphinx, leaving it to the British and French Mediterranean fleets to safely convoy the 200,000 men of British India's army to a suitable landing point.

Ten of the Japanese battleships return to India after waiting at Suez for the now returning empty transports from the Mediterranean port of disembarkation, and all set sail for Calcutta and Bombay.

On August 20th two Japanese battleships, with two cruisers and a full complement of destroyers, etc., arrive in Melbourne and embark the 20,000 men of the Australian expeditionary force, both in available transports and on the decks of their battleships, and convey them, fully armed, and with all haste, to wherever they are required in Egypt, India, or Europe.

These vessels, like the others, will not at any time participate in the fighting, but will return with the empty transports to Australia—unless *attacked*.

On August 18th *Italy, who had declared war on Austria and Germany*, joined with France on the west and Switzerland (who had also pluckily declared war on the Tenton and his partner, was assisted by Montenegro and Servia on the south-west), thus com-

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

pleting the circle of death round these ruthless destroyers of peace.

And now let us once more turn our eyes to the central figure in this Armageddon—his Imperial Majesty the Emperor Wilhelm of Germany. Descending like an avenging angel comes the Russian Bear, still smarting from the indignity inflicted upon him by the Kaiser at the time of the annexation by Austria of the two Servian provinces, when Russia, weak and tottering from the blow dealt her by the Japanese war, was humiliated to the dust before the nations of the world, and when she admitted her inability to challenge the German bully, with his army of 150,000 men. Attacked north, south, east and west by many of the now thoroughly aroused and indignant nations of Europe, Germany and Austria, even with their stupendous fighting machines, are confronted with a proposition never yet faced by any two countries during the last five hundred years. Though claiming to be an instrument of the Lord, and without heeding the opinions of the day (as the Kaiser in one of his many boastful speeches is reported to have said), appearances now point to a decided reversal of the second portion of this statement.

Shorn of all semblance of honour, truth, sacred and binding obligations, Germany now appears naked before the world as a false-hearted, deceitful bully, and the significant speeches and actions of her would-be Napoleon—an ass in a lion's skin—stand out in striking relief.

“The sea and sea power are indispensable for Germany's greatness. Neither upon the water nor upon the land in far away countries decisions must be arrived at without the consent of Germany.” Thus spoke the Kaiser on 21st April, 1900.

Again he speaks as follows:—“I shall never rest until I have raised my navy to the same height as my army” (1st January, 1900).

“We bitterly need a powerful German navy. Old empires sink to their doom (there is no question as to what empire the Kaiser alluded to here), and new ones are in the ascendant” (18th October, 1889).

Once more:—“Wherever the German Eagle has thrust his talons into a country, that country is German, and will remain German” (2nd March, 1898).



THE MAILED FIST.

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

"Germany must have a fleet of such strength that a war against the mightiest sea power (this unquestionably meant the British Navy) would involve risks threatening the supremacy of that sea power. For this purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest sea power, because generally the greatest sea power will not be in a position to concentrate all its forces against us." This speech was made in 1901, when England was embroiled in the Boer war, and will still be fresh in the memory of Australians and all Britishers alike.

But who amongst the widely scattered British race need further proof than this:—"Germany will build *upon the ruins of the Anglo-Saxon Empire* a new Teutonic Empire, the like of which the world has never seen before." These words, uttered by a great German statesman, give the finishing touches to a deep and deadly plot on our Empire, which has culminated in this year of our Lord 1914.

Once more we turn our eyes to that cockpit of Europe, that plucky little country, Belgium. This time we find her an aggressor, and with her allies (England, France and Holland) pressing the German autocrat slowly but surely towards Berlin. Four weeks have now elapsed since the Kaiser plunged the Continent of Europe into this inconceivable war. On all sides rolls the din of strife. The air and sky are thick with smoke and flame; the dead and dying strew the battlefields from shore to shore of Europe, and the land trembles beneath the tramp of horses and men. Surrounded by a bodyguard of three thousand bayonets, his Imperial Majesty the German Emperor listens with consternation to the alarming reports of reverses inflicted day by day on his boasted army, as messengers by land and air add, hour by hour, to the series of disasters now thick upon the German arms. Thoroughly alarmed and convinced that the Almighty, whom he has claimed allegiance with during the past ten years, has at last forsaken him, the Kaiser hastily calls a Council of War, which is attended by the Crown Prince, the German Chancellor, and all the available German leaders in the vicinity, and the request for an armistice is hastily decided upon! A messenger with a white flag is immediately despatched in the direction of Magdeburg, where a combined army of British, Belgian and French troops are irresistibly forcing their way through

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

the province of Saxony and hourly threatening the approaches to Brandenburg. A halt is called on the advancing columns as the messenger approaches and is conducted into the presence of Field Marshal Sir John French. The Kaiser's desire is stated by the bearer in the presence of a group of English, French and Belgian officers, who crowd excitedly round. The request proves to be:—"A cessation of hostilities for twenty-four hours to enable Germany to bury her dead." This is peremptorily refused, and once more the Titanic combat is renewed, with ever-increasing vigour, the success of the opposing forces rising and falling like the waves of an angry sea, and thus another week goes by.

Meanwhile the Russian Bear is locked in deadly embrace with his southern antagonist, as well as with the armies of the haughty Hohenzollern. In the vicinity of Thorn, on the river Vistula; Posen, on the river Wartha; and Breslau, on the Oder River, the subjects of the Czar are varyingly successful. The combined Italian and Swiss armies are now in touch with those of Montenegro and Servia, and all effect a junction near the Una River, on the north-west frontier of Bosnia, though suffering appalling losses in the achievement of this object, and still the fight goes on.

Forty days after the war was first declared two Englishmen are seen starting from Dover in their 90 h.p. hydroplane. Let them tell their tale:—"Ascending to a height of 8000 feet, we traverse the length of coast line from Calais to the Naze, rising to a height of 15,000 feet when passing over Heligoland, the German defences in Heligoland Bay, and the entrance to the Skager Rack. Below us on our right, formed up into three divisions, lies the naval power of Germany, secure and unhurt. Several white puffs of smoke appear below us, and a moment later the air is stirred about us as we tear along. On our left (where they were a month ago), stretching in magnificent array, the mighty battleships of England lie, silent and grim, their decks cleared for action, and the smoke still curling from their funnels. Curiosity compels us to descend, and, sweeping round in great circles near the coast of Northumberland, we approach to within a thousand feet of the sea and head towards the flagship "Marlborough," a white flag streaming from the tail of our "Sopwith." Alighting softly on the surface of the water within a few feet of the warship's gangway, our steed is made fast, and, after answering the sentry and giving

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

our cards we are ushered into the presence of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, England's future Nelson. 'Welcome,' said the Admiral, as he advanced to meet us with outstretched hand. 'I see by your cards that you are both Englishmen. To what do I owe the honour of this visit?' 'Well,' said I, 'we saw your fleet here five weeks ago, and are astonished to find you still in the same spot. If not asking too much, could you tell us why?'

'With a quiet smile the Admiral replied in the negative, but, lifting his right hand, he gave us a secret sign, on which we both produced sealed packages. Carefully examining the seals and the six distinguished signatures attached, the Admiral asked us to excuse him while he verified the contents of our secret orders alone in his state room. Returning in a few minutes, he invited us to his cabin, and, after being served with refreshments and lighting our cigars, he spoke as follows:—“England expects that every man this day will do his duty.” You remember those words which were uttered by my illustrious predecessor, Nelson, many years ago, and but a few miles south of this very spot? Well, gentlemen, things have greatly changed in this old world since those glorious fighting days, and circumstances have brought with them an alteration in our naval tactics. England, in days gone by, knew but one creed in naval matters—“Seek out your enemy wherever he may be, and destroy him instantly.” This policy of ours was known throughout the world, and was, no doubt, expected by our friends over there in the Kiel Canal, in the Baltic Sea, in Heligoland, and in the mouth of the river Elbe; and they laid their plans accordingly. They can hardly be blamed for this, as our immediate self-destruction was more than anticipated. What do you think they did a month ago, and three times since?’ ‘Goodness knows,’ said the aviators. ‘Well,’ continued Sir John, ‘on the morning of 11th August their whole fleet steamed out in great array, with decks cleared for action (this we discovered through our most powerful telescopes); but one peculiar feature connected with their advance was easily discernible—*each vessel kept a parallel course*, neither deviating to the port nor to the starboard side, until about twenty miles from their own coast; then simultaneously the fleet swung broadside on to us. I gave the word, “Full speed ahead,” and my whole squadron raced for the foe. Some twenty miles, however, also separated us, and ere we had covered five the whole German fleet discharged a thunderous

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

broadside against us, churning the sea some three miles in front of our fleet into hundreds of miniature waterspouts, at the same time turning their ships and retreating at full speed, each vessel following the identical course taken when advancing.'

'Here the great Admiral softly laughed. 'They say the pen is mightier than the sword,' said he, 'and, damme, but it's true. The Germans over yonder have so greedily swallowed the American, English, and her colonial press reports, that we Britons, in their minds, are suffering from mental and physical decay, and in this war would fall an easy prey to their wily traps. Well, gentlemen, this is why my fleet remains inactive, and waiting for the end. The approach to yonder shore has been mined most carefully with the object of destroying our navy; narrow channels, marked by small buoys, give safe passage to each German warship by careful steering; but woe betide the swift rush of an unsuspecting foe in that field of death. We cannot reach the German with our guns unless risking (without a fight) our ships in his deadly trap, and so we bide our time.

" 'We almost had a mutiny on board the fleet a week ago,' continued the Admiral, with a laugh, 'and I had to take drastic steps to quell it.' His guests stared at each other in astonishment to think the word mutiny possible on board a British man-of-war. 'Do you know,' continued the great man, 'that the last time those Germans cut their capers over there my Jack Tars swore and shook with rage, threatening to swim ashore to fight. I had the full crews of each ship mustered, and the 50 ringleaders brought before me. I "squared" them, however,' said the Admiral (using an Australian expression), 'but if that message does not come soon I am afraid they will kick up again.' 'Pray, how did you square them?' said the strangers; but at that moment the door of the state room was suddenly opened, and an officer handed the Admiral a wireless telegram, and these were the words he read:—

'Potsdam Palace, 18th September, 1914.

'Kaiser Wilhelm, abandoned by the Almighty, shorn of his fierce moustache, majestic appearance, mailed fist, and his place in the sun, capitulated to us at three o'clock this afternoon. Terms, P.O.D. To France, Alsace and Lorraine, also three hundred million pounds and six battleships. To Belgium, one hundred million pounds. To Switzerland, five mil-

THE WAR OF 1914: A FORECAST.

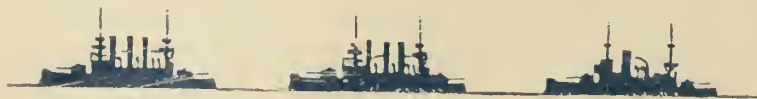
lion pounds. Other bills preparing. To John Bull. 50 battle-ships. (Get ready to escort them home.) Kitchener now arranging for our little cheque.—(Signed) Field Marshal Sir John French, Commander in Chief Allied Armies Britain, France and Belgium.'

"With a broad smile the hope of Britain's Navy rose, and, leaning towards us, said:—'That was how I squared them! Each ringleader was promised by me the honour of placing the Union Jack at the mast head of one German battleship captured, and when the sea over yonder has been cleared of those fireworks by the men who placed them there we will have much pleasure in escorting the great 'Anglo-German' fleet home to the Thames.'"

Six weeks from the landing of the first British troops on Belgian soil, Germany and Austria, were forced to sue for peace. Germany was only allowed to exist as a nation in the future by *absolute surrender*; the German fleet in the Baltic Sea and the Kiel Canal were claimed by Britain and by France; and the gallant French again possessed their long-lost provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, together with a stupendous sum of money as indemnity. Russia received a similar amount, and smaller sums were allotted to Belgium and the other countries which have participated in this awful struggle.

Germany, forced to accept all England's terms (which included amongst others the return to Denmark of the territory wrested from her in the last struggle), is humbled to the dust, and England, in a future Court of Nations, is unanimously elected chief presiding magistrate.

(The End.)



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